

SOAS Research Ethics Policy

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1. Aim and Scope

1.1 SOAS University of London is a research-led institution, committed to meeting international standards in research and research-led teaching in all of the School's disciplines.

1.2 SOAS and its researchers are expected to maintain the highest ethical standards and to foster values of honesty, rigour, openness, care and respect.¹ To meet these aims, SOAS will offer its research community:

- i. An extensive framework for research ethics, comprising clear policies, practices and procedures to support researchers;
- ii. Suitable learning, training, and mentoring opportunities to support the development of its researchers;
- iii. Robust management systems to ensure that policies relating to research integrity are implemented, that potential concerns are identified at an early stage and that mechanisms to support researchers in need of assistance are provided;
- iv. Awareness among researchers that high standards are expected of them.

1.3 This policy expresses SOAS' commitment to ethical standards by setting out the general ethical principles which SOAS requires its researchers to follow and by listing in detail the obligations of SOAS and its researchers (Annex 1). This policy also defines what is meant by research misconduct: if research has failed to meet the School's ethical standards. The terms of implementation of this policy are to be found in:

- i. Procedure: Ethical Review of Research Projects
- ii. [Code of Practice for SOAS Researchers: Using Personal Data in Research](#)
- iii. SOAS Policy: Investigating Allegations of Research Misconduct

1.4 The policy applies equally to SOAS staff and students, including distance-learning students conducting research at any level, and to any other person, regardless of their status, engaged in research under the auspices of SOAS, on behalf of, or in association with SOAS (for example, independent contractors, consultants, visiting members of staff, staff from other institutions, emeritus staff, and staff on honorary appointments). Research conducted collaboratively with other institutions or non-SOAS researchers is covered by this policy to the extent that it involves a contribution from a researcher acting under the auspices of the School. This policy does not apply to research conducted by individuals in a private capacity.

1.5 The policy is based on and is consistent with, [The Concordat to Support Research Integrity](#) and is aligned with the work of the UK Research Integrity Office and Research Councils UK.

2. Status

¹ A detailed description of SOAS commitments is set out in Annex 1 to this policy.

2.1 The version of SOAS Research Ethics Policy here was approved by the Research & Knowledge Exchange Committee on 26 October 2022, thereby superseding all the previous versions issued.

2.2 The policy will be reviewed and updated as necessary to take account of developments in these standards, as well as legal requirements.

3. Definitions

3.1 The following definitions are hereby adopted by the policy.

3.2 Research Integrity: the definition of research integrity currently used in UK higher education draws upon several existing values:²

- i. Honesty in all aspects of research includes the presentation of research goals, intentions and findings; reporting on research methods and procedures; methods of gathering data; using and acknowledging the work of other researchers; and conveying valid interpretations and making justifiable claims based on research findings.
- ii. Rigour, in line with prevailing disciplinary norms and standards in: performing research and using appropriate methods; adhering to an agreed protocol where appropriate; drawing interpretations and conclusions for the research; and communicating the results.
- iii. Transparency and open communication: in declaring conflicts of interest; the reporting of research data collection methods; the analysis and interpretation of data; making research findings widely available, which includes sharing negative results as appropriate; and presenting the work to other researchers and to the general public.
- iv. Care and respect for all participants in and subjects of research, including humans, animals, the environment and cultural objects. Those engaged with research must also show care and respect for the stewardship of research and scholarship for future generations.
- v. Accountability of funders, employers and researchers to collectively create a research environment in which individuals and organisations are empowered and enabled to own the research process. Those engaged with research must also ensure that individuals and organisations are held to account when behaviour falls short of the accepted standards

3.3 **Research:** Drawing on the UK funding bodies definition used in the Research Excellence Framework, as described in the *Assessment framework and guidance on submissions* (2011), 'research' is defined as:

A process of investigation leading to new insights, effectively shared ... It includes work of direct relevance to the needs of commerce, industry, and to the public and voluntary sectors; scholarship; the invention and generation of ideas, images, performances, artefacts including design, where these lead to new or substantially improved insights; and the use of existing knowledge in experimental development to produce new or substantially improved materials, devices, products and processes, including design and construction.

² *Concordat to Support Research Integrity*, p. 5

3.4 **Researcher:** Following the UK Research Integrity Office *Code of Practice for Research* (2009), ‘researchers’ are defined as any people who conduct research, including but not limited to: employee; independent contractors or consultants; students; visiting or emeritus members of staff; or members of staff on an honorary appointment.

3.5 **Research misconduct:** Behaviour or actions that fall short of the standards of ethics, research and scholarship required to ensure that the integrity of research is upheld. See section 7 below.

4. Relationship with Professional Codes and Standards

4.1 Where these exist, SOAS researchers are expected to follow the ethical standards or codes of practice issued by the relevant professional body that are specific to their academic discipline or area.

4.2 In the unlikely event of conflict between professional standards and this policy (or SOAS’s ethical procedures), SOAS’s policy should be followed. Annex 2 provides for a list of professional bodies and associations.

5. Principles of Research Integrity

5.1 SOAS believes that ethical research must be guided by the following principles, which are embodied in the [Concordat to Support Research Integrity](#):

- i. Maintaining the highest standards of rigour and integrity in all aspects of research;
- ii. Ensuring that research is conducted according to appropriate ethical, legal and professional frameworks, obligations and standards;
- iii. Supporting a research environment that is underpinned by a culture of integrity and based on good governance, best practice and support for the development of researchers;
- iv. Using transparent, robust and fair processes to deal with allegations of research misconduct should they arise;
- v. Working together to strengthen the integrity of research and to reviewing progress regularly and openly.

5.2 The *Concordat* defines a set of core values, which apply to any research and is not exhaustive. Additional values and principles may be relevant in specific contexts.

5.3 All researchers are required to seek the appropriate level of ethical approval prior to any research being undertaken.

5.4 Retrospective submissions for ethical approval will not be authorised. Thus, research data that has been gathered in contravention of the requirements set out in the Research Ethics policy and associated procedures cannot be utilised.

5.5 For taught students (undergraduate/Masters) undertaking primary research, covert research will not be authorised.

6. Collaborative Research ³

6.1 When research is conducted collaboratively, particularly within inter-disciplinary or international partnerships, there must be clear and explicit agreement about the standards and frameworks that will apply.

6.2 In international collaborations, partners should agree to conduct their research according to the same high standards of research integrity as expected in the UK and to investigate any suspected deviation from these standards. In particular, any alleged research misconduct must be brought to the immediate attention of the project leader(s) and to the senior responsible officer in the university or institute (employer) in order for it to be investigated according to the policies and procedures of the partner with the primary responsibility to do so, while respecting the laws and sovereignty of the States of all participating parties.

6.3 In formal, large scale and often externally-funded international research projects there may be questions as to which country should conduct the investigation if allegations of misconduct are raised and what is to happen when the relevant national policies are at odds with each other. The Coordinating Committee of the OECD Global Science Forum recommends the establishment of an agreement for collaborative research that addresses the promotion of responsible conduct in research and describes the procedures for the investigation of allegations of research misconduct within the project.

6.4 The OECD Global Science Forum Committee has produced boiler-plate text for International Agreements, which should be embodied in the contracts that establish the collaborative project. This is to be found in Annex 3, as are the responsibilities of individual and institutional partners in cross-boundary research collaborations.

7. Research Misconduct

7.1 Research misconduct can take many forms that include, but are not limited to:

- i. **Fabrication:** making up results or other outputs (e.g. artefacts) and presenting them as if they were real
- ii. **Falsification:** manipulating research processes or changing or omitting data without good cause
- iii. **Plagiarism:** using other people's material without giving proper credit
- iv. **Failure** to meet ethical, legal and professional obligations: for example, failure to declare

³ This section is based on the [European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity](#), European Research Foundation & ALLEA, March 2011: and the [Montreal Statement on Research Integrity in Cross-Boundary Research Collaborations](#).

competing interests; misrepresentation of involvement or authorship; misrepresentation of interests; breach of confidentiality; lack of informed consent; misuse of personal data; and abuse of research subjects or materials

- v. **Improper** dealing with allegations of misconduct: failing to address possible infringements such as attempts to cover up misconduct or reprisals against whistle-blowers

7.2 Although SOAS recognises that while the responsibility for ensuring that no misconduct occurs rests above all with individual researchers, it bears the primary responsibility for investigating allegations of research misconduct (see Annex 1). SOAS undertakes to have procedures that deal effectively and fairly with research misconduct and to ensure that anyone investigating such allegations has the knowledge, skills, experience and authority to do so. SOAS is also responsible for taking appropriate steps to remedy any situations arising from an investigation. This can include: imposing sanctions, correcting the research record, and reporting to regulatory and statutory bodies, research participants, funders or other professional bodies as circumstances, as contractual obligations and statutory requirements dictate.

7.3 SOAS will be mindful that minor infractions, where there is no evident intention to deceive, may often be addressed informally through mentoring, education and guidance.

7.4 With regard to research misconduct (*Concordat*, pp. 17/19), SOAS researchers will:

- i. Act in good faith with regard to allegations of research misconduct, whether in making allegations or in being required to participate in an investigation.
- ii. Handle potential instances of research misconduct in an appropriate manner; this includes reporting misconduct to employers, funders and professional, statutory and regulatory bodies as circumstances require

7.5 SOAS will therefore:

- i. Have clear, well-articulated and confidential mechanisms for reporting allegations of research misconduct;
- ii. Have robust, transparent and fair processes for dealing with allegations of misconduct that reflect best practice;
- iii. Ensure that all researchers are made aware of the relevant contacts and procedures for making allegations;
- iv. Act with no detriment to whistle-blowers making allegations of misconduct in good faith;
- v. Provide information on investigations of research misconduct to funders of research and professional and/or statutory bodies as required by their conditions of grant and other legal, professional and statutory obligations;
- vi. Provide appropriate information to professional and/or statutory bodies;
- vii. Either provide a named point of contact, or else recognise an appropriate nominated third party, to act as confidential liaison for whistle-blowers or any other person wishing to raise concerns about the integrity of research being conducted under SOAS auspices.

8. Audit and Assurance

- 8.1 The Research and Knowledge Exchange Delivery team at SOAS will undertake periodic audit and internal assurance activities in order to ensure that there is proper compliance with the Research Ethics Policy and all associated procedures.

Annex 1

1. SOAS Commitments

1.1 The five core principles of research integrity, as defined in section five, entail specific responsibilities for both SOAS and its researchers. SOAS responsibilities are as follows:

- i. Implementing the *Concordat* within their research environment and collaborating with researchers, funders of research and other employers of researchers to maintain a research environment that develops good research practice and nurtures a culture of research integrity, as described in commitments 2 to 5;
- ii. Supporting researchers to understand and act according to expected standards, values and behaviours, and robustly defending them and the integrity of their research when they live up to these expectations in difficult circumstances;
- iii. Having clear policies, practices and procedures to support researchers, and providing clear ethical approval procedure available to all researchers;
- iv. Making sure that all researchers are aware of and understand policies and processes relating to ethical approval. In short, SOAS will promote awareness among researchers of the standards and behaviours that are expected of them;
- v. Supporting researchers to reflect best practice in relation to ethical, legal and professional requirements;
- vi. Having appropriate arrangements in place through which researchers can access advice and guidance on ethical, legal and professional obligations and standards;
- vii. Offering suitable learning, training and mentoring opportunities to support the development of researchers;
- viii. Putting in place robust management systems to ensure that policies relating to research, research integrity and researcher behaviour are implemented;
- ix. Putting in place systems within the research environment that both identify potential concerns at an early stage and provide mechanisms for support to researchers in need of assistance;
- x. Working towards reflecting recognised best practice in systems, processes and practices;
- xi. The Research Ethics Panel will present a short annual statement to SOAS Governing Body in July every year that has been endorsed by the Research Ethics Panel in April and the Research & Enterprise Committee in May. This statement will also be sent for information to Academic Board.

1.2 That statement will:

- i. provide a summary of actions and activities that have been undertaken to support and strengthen understanding and application of research integrity issues (for example postgraduate and researcher training, or process reviews);
- ii. provide assurances that the processes in place for dealing with allegations of misconduct are transparent, robust and fair, and that they continue to be appropriate to the needs of the organization;

- iii. provide a high-level statement on any formal investigations of research misconduct that have been undertaken. To improve accountability and to provide assurances that measures being taken continue to support consistently high standards of research integrity, this statement will be made publicly available on SOAS website.
- iv. Regularly reviewing its policies and procedures on research integrity

2. SOAS Researchers' Commitments

2.1 In order to abide by the five core principles of research integrity, SOAS researchers will:⁴

- i. Understand the expected standards of rigour and integrity relevant to their research and discipline. Researchers are obliged to take responsibility for the trustworthiness of their research.
- ii. Maintain the highest standards of rigour and integrity in their outputs at all times.
- iii. Ensure that all research is subject to active and appropriate consideration of ethical issues.
- iv. Compliance: Comply with ethical, legal and professional frameworks, obligations and standards as required by statutory and regulatory authorities, and by employers, funders and other relevant stakeholders.
- v. Training: Take a proactive role in their personal development by participating in appropriate training. This includes training on changing ethical, legal and professional obligations and standards. Researchers should be aware of and adhere to regulations and policies related to research. As a minimum it is expected that researchers should complete the [Research Integrity online course](#) and repeat this every three years to ensure that they are compliant and aware of current best practice.
- vi. Research Methods: Researchers should employ appropriate research methods, base conclusions on critical analysis of the evidence and report findings and interpretations fully and objectively, including where these may be negative.
- vii. Research Records: Researchers should keep clear, accurate records of all research.
- viii. Authorship: Researchers should take responsibility for their contributions to all publications, funding applications, reports and other representations of their research. Lists of authors should include all those and only those who meet applicable authorship criteria.
- ix. Publication Acknowledgement: Researchers should acknowledge in publications the names and roles of those who made significant contributions to the research (but do not meet authorship criteria), including writers, funders, sponsors, and others.
- x. Peer Review: Researchers should provide fair, prompt and rigorous evaluations and respect confidentiality when reviewing others' work.
- xi. Conflict of Interest: Researchers should disclose financial and other conflicts of interest that could compromise the trustworthiness of their work in research proposals, publications and public communications as well as in all review activities.
- xii. Reporting Irresponsible Research Practices: Researchers should report to the appropriate authorities any suspected research misconduct, including fabrication, falsification or plagiarism, and other irresponsible research practices that undermine the trustworthiness of

⁴ In addition to the *Concordat*, see the: [Singapore Statement on Research Integrity](#).

research, such as carelessness, improperly ordering authors, failing to report conflicting data, or the use of misleading analytical methods.

Annex 2

Professional Codes and Standards

1. SOAS continues to update and revise its policies and procedures on research ethics, being committed to the principles outlined in the revised [*Concordat to Support Research Integrity*](#) (Oct-2019). Professional associations have importance for disseminating best practice, as well as the need for the researchers to comply with professional frameworks. There is an expectation for researchers to comply with ethical, legal and professional frameworks, obligations and standards as required by statutory and regulatory authorities, as well as by employers, funders and other relevant stakeholders.
2. Some departments and centres at SOAS already have strong links with one or more professional associations and refer to their ethical code of practice. It would be beneficial to all departments, centres and individual academics to adopt the code of conduct of one or more professional associations. This does not imply an obligation for individual academics to become members of these associations but that the departmental website would provide a link to their Code of Practice, where relevant, for the guidance of staff and students. Doing so would help SOAS to comply with the requirement of the *Concordat* to make professional obligations and standards accessible to its researchers.
3. Below is a collated set of the professional associations currently referenced by academic members of staff in the departments and centres of SOAS.

Professional associations currently referred to by academic members of staff

Department / Research Area	Organisation	Ethics / Research Integrity Guidance or Policy
General	UKRI Research Integrity	https://www.ukri.org/about-us/policies-and-standards/research-integrity/
Anthropology	Association of Social Anthropologists (ASA)	https://www.theasa.org/ethics/guidelines.shtml
	American Anthropological Association (AAA)	http://www.americananthro.org/ParticipateAndAdvocate/Content.aspx?ItemNumber=1895 AND http://ethics.americananthro.org/category/statement/
	Royal Anthropological Institute (RAI)	https://www.therai.org.uk/about-the-rai/governance/ethical-policy/
	European Commission	http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/other/hi/ethics-guide-ethnog-anthrop_en.pdf
History of Art and Archaeology	UK Museums Association	https://www.museumsassociation.org/ethics/code-of-ethics
	International Council of Museums	http://archives.icom.museum/ethics.html
	Society for American Archaeology	http://www.saa.org/AbouttheSociety/PrinciplesofArchaeologicalEthics/tabid/203/Default.aspx
	Archaeological Institute of America	https://www.archaeological.org/pdfs/AIA_Code_of_EthicsA5S.pdf
	Chartered Institute for Archaeologists	https://www.archaeologists.net/sites/default/files/CodesofConduct.pdf
History	Royal Historical Society	http://royalhistsoc.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/rhsstatementonethics.pdf
	American Historical Association	https://www.historians.org/jobs-and-professional-development/statements-standards-and-guidelines-of-the-discipline/statement-on-standards-of-professional-conduct

	Oral History Society	http://www.tasglann.org.uk/training/oral-history/oral_history_society_ethical_guidelines.pdf
Music	American Musicological Society	http://www.ams-net.org/administration/ethics.php
	Society for Ethnomusicology	http://c.ymcdn.com/sites/www.ethnomusicology.org/resource/resmgr/docs/Ethics-Statement_EC_031118.pdf
	British Forum for Ethnomusicology	https://bfe.org.uk/bfe-ethics-statement
Religions and Philosophy	British Association for the Study of Religions	https://basr.ac.uk/ethics/
	American Philosophical Association	http://www.apaonline.org/page/codeofconduct
Media Studies	Media, Communication and Cultural Studies Association	http://www.meccsa.org.uk/news/statement-of-research-ethics-guidelines/
	International Communication Association	https://www.icahdq.org/page/MissionStatement
Linguistics	Linguistics Society of America	https://www.linguisticsociety.org/resource/ethics
	British Association for Applied Linguistics	https://baalweb.files.wordpress.com/2016/10/goodpractice_full_2016.pdf
	Australian Linguistic Society	http://www.als.asn.au/activities.html#ethics
	American Association for Applied Linguistics	http://www.aaal.org/page/EthicsGuidelines
Development Studies	Academy of Social Sciences	https://www.acss.org.uk/developing-generic-ethics-principles-social-science/academy-adopts-five-ethical-principles-for-social-science-research/
	Institute of Development Studies	http://www.ids.ac.uk/files/dmfile/Research_Ethics_Policy.pdf
Politics	International Studies Association	https://www.isanet.org/ISA/Governance/Policy-and-Procedures/ID/9/ISA-Code-of-Conduct
	American Political Association	http://www.apsanet.org/portals/54/Files/Publications/APSAEthicsGuide2012.pdf

	Political Studies Association UK	https://www.psa.ac.uk/sites/default/files/GUIDELINES%20FOR%20GOOD%20PROFESSIONAL%20CONDUCT.pdf
	British International Studies Association	https://ethicsbisa.wordpress.com/
Law	Socio-Legal Studies Association	https://www.slsa.ac.uk/index.php/ethics-statement
	Law Society	http://www.lawsociety.org.uk/support-services/ethics/

Annex 3

Collaborative and/or International Research

1. International Agreements

- 1.1 The OECD Global Science Forum Committee has produced a boiler-plate text for International Agreements, which should be embodied in the contracts that establish the collaborative project.

We, the parties, agree:

- i. to conduct our research according to the standards of research integrity, as defined in the (specify the national codes of conduct and disciplinary or national ethical guidelines that apply);
- ii. that any suspected deviation from these standards, in particular alleged research misconduct, will be brought to the immediate attention of (all designated contact point(s)) and investigated according to the policies and procedures of (to be filled in with the body with primary responsibility), while respecting the laws and sovereignty of the States of all participating parties;
- iii. to cooperate in and support any such investigations; and
- iv. to accept (subject to any appeal process) the conclusions of any such investigation and to take appropriate actions

2. Responsibilities of Individual and Institutional Partners in Cross-Boundary Research Collaborations

2.1 Overall Collaborative Responsibilities

- i. *Integrity:* Collaborating partners should take responsibility for the trustworthiness of the collaborative research.
- ii. *Trust:* The behaviour of all collaborating partners should be worthy of the trust of all other partners. Responsibility for establishing and maintaining this level of trust lies with all collaborating partners.
- iii. *Purpose:* Collaborative research should be initiated and conducted for purposes that advance knowledge to the benefit of humankind.
- iv. *Goals:* Collaborating partners should agree at the outset on the goals of the research. Changes in goals should be negotiated and agreed to by all partners.

2.2 Responsibilities in Establishing and Managing the Collaboration

- i. *Communication:* Collaborating partners should communicate with each other as frequently and openly as necessary to foster full, mutual understanding of the research.

- ii. *Agreements:* Agreements that govern collaborative research should be understood and ratified by all collaborating partners. Agreements that unduly or unnecessarily restrict dissemination of data, findings or other research products should be avoided.
- iii. *Compliance with Laws, Policies and Regulations:* The collaboration as a whole should be in compliance with all laws, policies and regulations to which it is subject. Collaborating partners should promptly determine how to address conflicting laws, policies or regulations that apply to the research.
- iv. *Costs and Rewards:* The costs and rewards of collaborative research should be distributed fairly among collaborating partners.
- v. *Transparency:* Collaborative research should be conducted and its results disseminated transparently and honestly, with as much openness as possible under existing agreements. Sources of funding should be fully and openly declared.
- vi. *Resource Management:* Collaborating partners should use human, animal, financial and other resources appropriately.
- vii. *Monitoring:* Collaborating partners should monitor the progress of research projects to foster the integrity and the timely completion and dissemination of the work.

2.3 Responsibilities in Collaborative Relationships

- i. *Roles and Responsibilities:* Collaborating partners should come to mutual understandings about their roles and responsibilities in the planning, conduct and dissemination of research projects. Such understandings should be renegotiated when roles or responsibilities change.
- ii. *Customary Practices and Assumptions:* Collaborating partners should openly discuss their customary practices and assumptions related to the research. Diversity of perspectives, expertise and methods, and differences in customary practices, standards and assumptions that may compromise the integrity of the research should be addressed openly.
- iii. *Conflict:* Collaborating partners should seek prompt resolution of conflicts, disagreements and misunderstandings, at the individual or institutional level, as necessary.
- iv. *Authority of Representation:* Collaborating partners should come to agreement on who has authority to speak on behalf of the collaboration.
- v. *Recognition of all Partners:* The contributions of all partners in research collaborations, especially junior partners, should receive full and appropriate recognition.

2.4 Responsibilities for Outcomes of Collaborative Research

- i. *Data, Intellectual Property and Research Records:* Collaborating partners should come to agreement, at the outset and later as needed, on the use, management, sharing and ownership of data, intellectual property, and research records.

- ii. *Publication:* Collaborating partners should come to agreement, at the outset and later as needed, on how publication and other dissemination decisions will be made.
- iii. *Authorship and Acknowledgement:* Collaborating partners should come to agreement, at the outset and later as needed, on standards for authorship and acknowledgement of joint research products. Publications and other products should state the contributions of all contributing parties.
- iv. *Accountability:* Collaborating partners should be accountable to each other, to funders and to other stakeholders in the accomplishment of the research.

Document version

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2009	-	-	2009
2015	Research Office (Dr A Lewis)	Updated to reflect the <i>Concordat to Support Research Integrity</i>	18 Feb-2015
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